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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#) [KDEM](#)
SUBJECT: PLO CENTRAL COUNCIL SUPPORTS ABBAS, CONDEMNS HAMAS

REF: A. GMP20070721745003
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 1499

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: The PLO Central Council (PLO-CC) released a July 20 statement (Ref A) after two days of meetings supporting President Abbas and PM Fayyad and calling on HAMAS to restore the Gaza Strip to PA control. PLO-CC Speaker Salim Zanun said this PLO leadership body will follow Abbas' lead on elections and wants to revise the electoral system and replace the Basic Law with a Palestinian constitution. HAMAS condemned the call for early elections and accused Abbas of failing to watch out for Palestinians' well-being. End summary.

PLO-CC STATEMENT SUPPORTS ABBAS, CONDEMNS HAMAS

[1](#)2. (U) Following the PLO Central Council (PLO-CC) meeting July 18-19 in Ramallah, the PLO-CC released a statement supporting PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's government (ref A). The statement criticized HAMAS for its take-over of the Gaza Strip and called on HAMAS to return Gaza to its pre-June 2007 status. The PLO-CC called for an electoral system of 100 percent proportional representation (versus the current mixed system) and directed the constitutional committee to complete the preparation of a Palestinian constitution to replace the Basic Law.

PLO-CC SPEAKER FLESHES OUT PLO-CC PLANS

[1](#)3. (U) Speaker of the Council Salim Zanun told the press that the PLO-CC endorsed President Abbas' request to call for early presidential and legislative elections (see ref B). Zanun said Abbas will be responsible for the timing of the elections and commented that the PLO-CC has reservations about holding elections in the West Bank without the Gaza Strip. Zanun said the PLO-CC insists HAMAS reverse its actions in Gaza before elections are held. He added that the elections should use a system of 100 percent proportional representation, combining all the Palestinian territories into a single electoral district. (Note: In 2006, half the PLC deputies were elected based on proportional representation and half from districts. End note.)

[1](#)4. (U) Zanun told the press that the PLO-CC supports Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's government and endorses the presidential decrees issued since HAMAS' takeover of the Gaza Strip. He announced the formation of a committee to resume drafting of a Palestinian constitution in preparation for

statehood. Without setting a date, Zanut suggested that the PLO-CC and the Palestinian National Council (PNC) should meet in the future to pursue these issues. (Note: The PNC is a PLO body of over 600 members responsible for PLO policy and programs. End note.)

HAMAS CRITICIZES ABBAS, ISRAEL AND THE U.S.

15. (U) Former HAMAS Foreign Minister Mahmud al-Zahar said HAMAS will thwart any attempt to hold early elections, and criticized Abbas for his "hasty decisions without considering the well-being of the Palestinian people." Early elections could only be held, he said, if all Palestinian factions agreed. He gave no indication that HAMAS will consider early elections. Zahar accused Israel and the U.S. of failing to recognize the Palestinians' legitimately elected officials.

COMMENT

16. (C) Abbas does not intend to pursue early elections, and HAMAS likely realizes this, given that he has called for early elections repeatedly over the last eighteen months. The public exchange between the PLO/Fatah and HAMAS about early elections may continue, but neither side seems to take seriously the other side's rhetoric. The PLO-CC meeting and subsequent statement was intended to give some additional political cover to Abbas' emergency decrees and Fayyad's government, but most Palestinians are more concerned about what Fayyad can deliver than public statements for or against him.

WALLES